

## Chapter 4

### The Neolithic

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#### 4.1 Overview

Despite their island setting and the fact that they are self-governing British Crown Dependencies, administered from Great Britain, archaeologically the Channel Islands belong to the Armorican massif. In common with the Cotentin peninsula (Manche, Normandy) and with Brittany, the islands underwent Neolithic colonisation between 5000 BC and 4800 BC; they were undoubtedly colonised from these two regions, by sea. In terms of the potential number of Neolithic sites in the Channel Islands, it would appear that the two large islands, Jersey and Guernsey, are roughly equal. The Neolithic archaeology of Guernsey is a little better known than that of Jersey, thanks partly to the activities of the 19th century antiquary and collector Frederick Corbin Lukis, and partly to the important excavation of the monument at Les Fouaillages by Ian Kinnes of the British Museum (Kinnes 1982; McFadyen *et al.* 2017). The current excavation at Simon Sand Quarry on Jersey by Lesley McFadyen, and the significant investment represented by the Research Framework for the Historic Environment of Jersey Project, could however equalise the state of knowledge in these two islands.

##### 4.1.1 Chronological introduction: a glimpse into the Mesolithic of the Channel Islands

The Mesolithic of the Channel Islands is still poorly understood, attested solely by scattered projectile point that have been found in sites of other periods or in small-scale excavations. Culturally, this material seems to be linked with that found in Finistère and in the northern part of the Cotentin peninsula (Nord-Cotentin). Two examples demonstrate the occupation of the Channel Islands – especially those that were already separated from the Continent – from at least as early as the Middle Mesolithic (9th millennium BC). The finds from Guernsey, which are very limited, just comprise five projectile point found during the aforementioned excavation of the monument at Les Fouaillages (Figure 1). These were easily distinguishable from the rest of the lithic assemblage which was dominated by Neolithic material. The flint used for the Mesolithic artefacts is of good quality and resembles that used in the Nord-Cotentin. The same flint was used at Les Fouaillages during the Neolithic period and this suggests that the same sources were exploited. The presence of a Bertheaume-type bladelet links this site with findspots in Finistère, while a Mandorle-type point links it with the Nord-Cotentin area (Ghesquière 2017). A series of radiocarbon dates were obtained from hazelnut shells that were found scattered in the cairn alongside both Neolithic material and the Mesolithic artefacts. All the dates belong to the Middle Mesolithic period (namely SUERC-23721 (GU-18716): 9020±35 BP, 8300–8210 cal BC; SUERC-23722 (GU-18717): 8870±35 BP, 8230–7830 cal BC; SUERC-23723 (GU-18718): 8950±35 BP, 8280–7960 cal BC; SUERC-23725 (GU-18720): 9015±35 BP, 8300–8210 cal BC; SUERC-23721 (GU-18716): 9020±35 BP, 8300–8020 cal BC; all calibrated dates in this contribution are cited at 95.4% probability, rounded out, and were calibrated using OxCal v4.4.4).

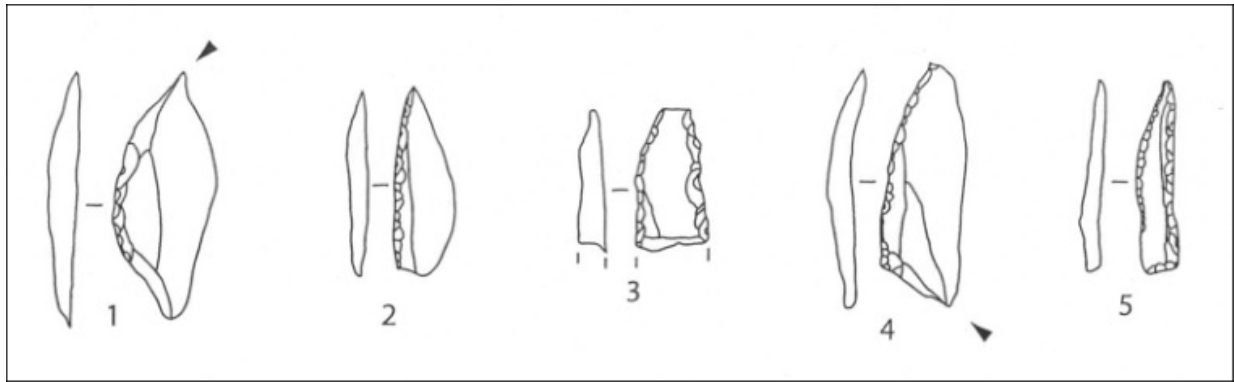


Figure 1: Mesolithic projectile point armatures discovered during the excavation of the monument at Les Fouaillages (Ghesquière 2017). (Drawing by E. Ghesquière.)

The finds from Lihou come from a small-scale excavation, smaller than 10 m<sup>2</sup> in extent, on a small island close to the west coast of Nord-Cotentin. The preliminary results of interest here relate to the artefacts found in the first sondage, measuring 2 m<sup>2</sup>. In spite of the discovery of 19 projectile point armatures, the assemblage cannot be regarded as being representative. The layer in which they were found is unique and the excavators regarded it as being suspect when they undertook their initial examination of the assemblage in the 2000s (Heather Sebire, pers. comm.). The whole of the assemblage could be attributed to the Bertheaume stylistic complex of Finistère even though the site is closer to the coast of Nord-Cotentin. A date obtained from a carbonised hazelnut shell (OxA-14198: 8310±39 BP, 7510–7190 cal BC) places it at the end of the Middle Mesolithic.

Two small triangular projectile point armatures (transverse arrowheads?) were also present and these pose a problem in being associated with an industry of Bertheaume type. We may be dealing with an Armorican variant (and thus one without inverse flat retouch) of a Châtelet transverse arrowhead, since it shares its general morphology and its hyper-‘pygmy’ character with such points. There can be little doubt about the Final Mesolithic date of the Châtelet-transverse-arrowhead.

These two brief forays (certainly not exhaustive) into the Mesolithic of the Channel Islands demonstrate that the archipelago was occupied well before the Neolithic, and this implies that the people in question must have had a good knowledge of how to navigate from Normandy or Brittany. The Normandy coast is closest but the Raz Blanchard current, being one of the strongest in Europe, could have limited crossings from there. Whatever were the routes of travel, it is clear that the presence of several Bertheaume bladelets points to the cultural contexts of Finistère in Brittany. Our evidential base is still too small for us to be able to determine whether the communities of hunter-foragers on the archipelago developed insular idiosyncrasies or not.

The formation of Guernsey, Lihou, Herm and Sark as islands (i.e. their separation from the neighbouring landmass) had occurred from as early as the Early Mesolithic (Sebire and Renouf 2010), but the story for Jersey is more complicated as it did not become completely separated

from the mainland until the Bronze Age. Even so, the narrow isthmus that linked Jersey to the Normandy coast would have been difficult to traverse with bare feet and it is assumed that, from the Early Neolithic period onwards, a boat would have been used to reach that coast. As regards points of access to the Normandy coast, the strong marine current that separates the isles from the Continent will have acted as a brake, if not an obstacle, to sailings from Normandy. Furthermore, there are several signs from the Neolithic (in particular, the megalithic monuments) that point to stronger connections with Brittany than with Normandy: decorated stelae, complex dolmens, etc. It is thus possible that the Neolithic colonisation of the islands was a question of people coming mostly from Brittany rather than from Normandy. People in Brittany would have been more familiar with navigation, having sailed between the numerous Breton islands from the Mesolithic onwards.

The big question remains that of the navigational capabilities of the Neolithic farmers. The descendants of the farmers of the Linearbandkeramik tradition who arrived on the Channel coast probably lacked navigational skills. So how did they acquire such expertise? There is a strong possibility that they learned it from the Mesolithic groups who lived on the coast.

#### **4.1.2 The Neolithisation of the islands**

In the Channel Islands, Neolithic settlement sites are hard to characterise. Often, the evidence is found during excavations of sites of other periods, as on the islet of Herm, or at L'Erée (Camp Varouf) on Guernsey (Cunliffe and Jersey 2000), at L'Ouzière on Jersey (Patton and Finlaison 2001), or else it was discovered long ago, in disturbed contexts, such as at La Motte (Sinel 1913), Le Pinnacle (Godfray and Burdo 1949, 1950) and Grosnez Hougue (Rybot 1924) on Jersey. Of note are the topographic position of these sites in elevated locations, sometimes on coastal promontories (as at Mont Orgueil) (Barton 1984), and the frequent proximity of loamy soils (loess), favourable for agriculture. This coastal distribution of settlements echoes that on the Cotentin peninsula. At Barneville-Carteret, for example, a Middle Neolithic settlement was discovered on an enclosed promontory that was also occupied during the Early Bronze Age (Billard and Delrieu, unpublished).

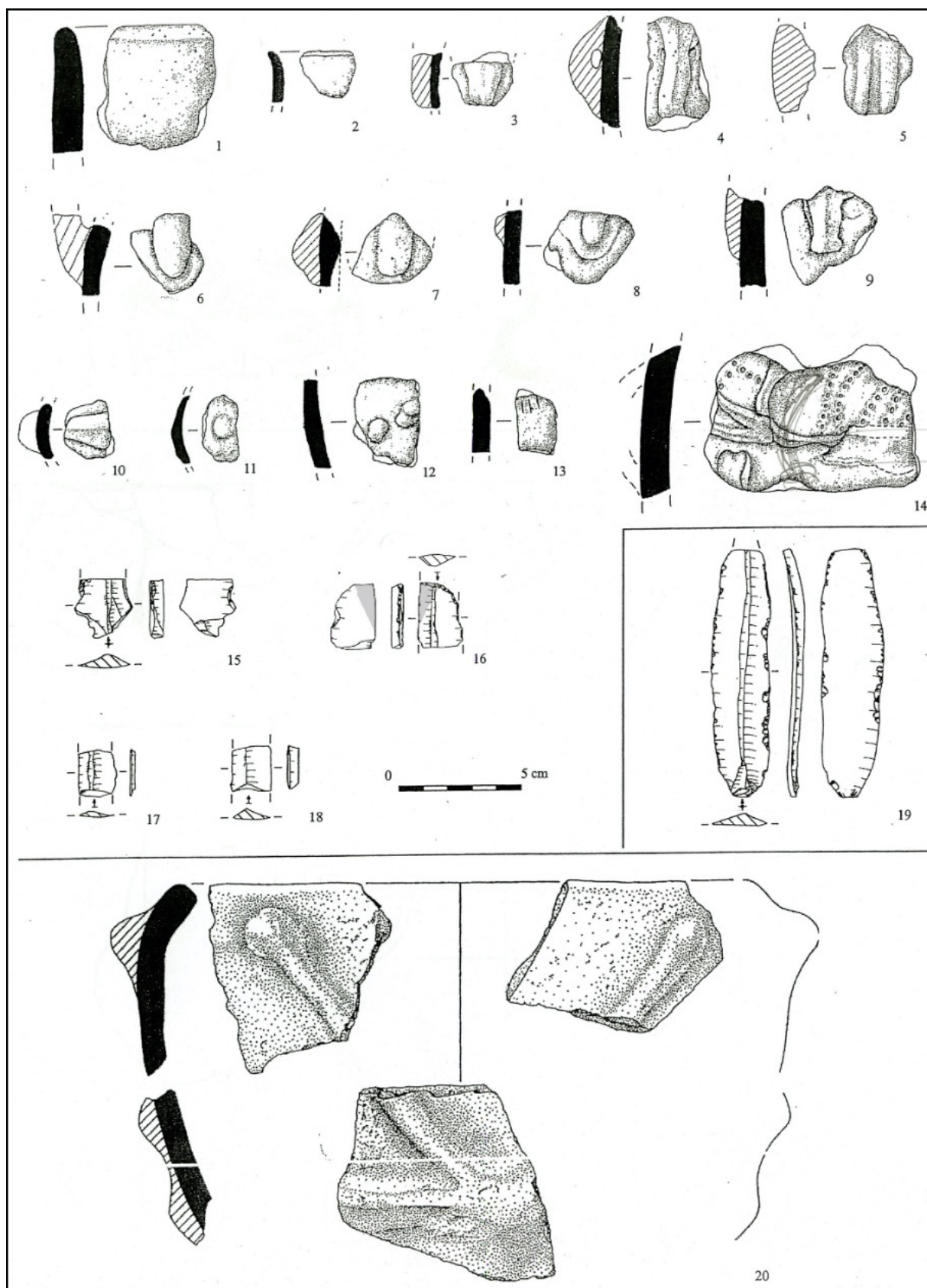


Figure 2: Early Neolithic (Late/Final VSG) pottery from L'Ouzière, Saint-Ouen's Bay, Jersey (Patton and Finlaison 2001).



Two sites provide a fuller picture of Neolithic settlement in the Channel Islands. The first, currently being excavated by Lesley McFadyen at Simon Sand Quarry (St Peter, Jersey), lies at the edge of the foreshore and has been preserved by an overlying sand dune. Since the investigations are still at an early stage, it is not yet possible to determine the exact form of the settlement but the domestic character of the site is not in doubt, with a considerable number of ditches having been found (McFayden et al., unpublished presentation). Artefactual finds are abundant. The pottery consists of ovoid vessel forms with frequent applied decoration (knobs, horizontal cordons and V-cordons), characteristic of the Late/Final phase of the Villeneuve-Saint-Germain (VSG) culture. Flint finds are also well represented, with a series of blades of Cinglais flint, and several other blades made from different kinds of flint, possibly from the Seine valley. The assemblage is characteristic of this period (burins and retouched blades), with a blade-based projectile point armature whose tip has been created using the microburin technique, and which has inverse retouch at its base. Made from Cinglais flint, this armature typologically belongs with those found in Normandy, at Fontenay-le-Marmion, Calvados (Giraud 2004) and Omonville-la-Petite, Manche (Juhel 2005, 2006; Juhel *et al.* 2006; Charraud 2013). The series of blades from Simon Sand Quarry enables this site to be linked to numerous surface discoveries of fragmentary Cinglais flint blades that have been found both in Jersey and Guernsey. The source of the Cinglais flint is the mines of Espins/Les-Moutiers-en-Cinglais, Calvados, (Charraud 2013), whose products circulated widely over the north-west quarter of France during the Early Neolithic (Late/Final VSG and the beginning of the Middle Neolithic I). It is worth noting that despite the extensive nature of the artefactual assemblage found at Simon Sand Quarry, no fragment of a schist bangle has been discovered. Such bangles are characteristic of the VSG culture, particularly in its late and final stages – the latter characterised by cordoned vessels – and they are regularly found elsewhere on Jersey, and also in Guernsey (Fig. 4). It is too early to tell whether their absence from Simon Sand quarry is simply a matter of chance, or whether the site dates to a period slightly later than the Late/Final VSG.

The second site that qualifies as a settlement is Royal Hotel, Guernsey (Sebire 2012). The excavation was just a small-scale sondage but the lithic assemblage (with its blades of Cinglais flint) and the pottery (a hemispherical cordoned vessel) place it firmly in the Early Neolithic, in the Late/Final phases of the VSG culture. Of note is the fact that the edges of the cordon on the pot have been decorated with a dot design. This is not found on Continental VSG pots, but it is found in later contexts during the Middle Neolithic I in the Channel Islands in the Pinacle-Fouaillages Group.

According to our current state of knowledge, the Neolithisation of the islands of Jersey and Guernsey followed that of the Cotentin peninsula in Normandy and of the Côtes d'Armor in Brittany, and probably occurred between 4900 BC and 4700 BC, during the Late/Final phase of the VSG culture (Table 1). This pre-dates the earliest evidence for the Neolithic in Great Britain by over 700 years (Anderson-Whymark and Garrow 2015).

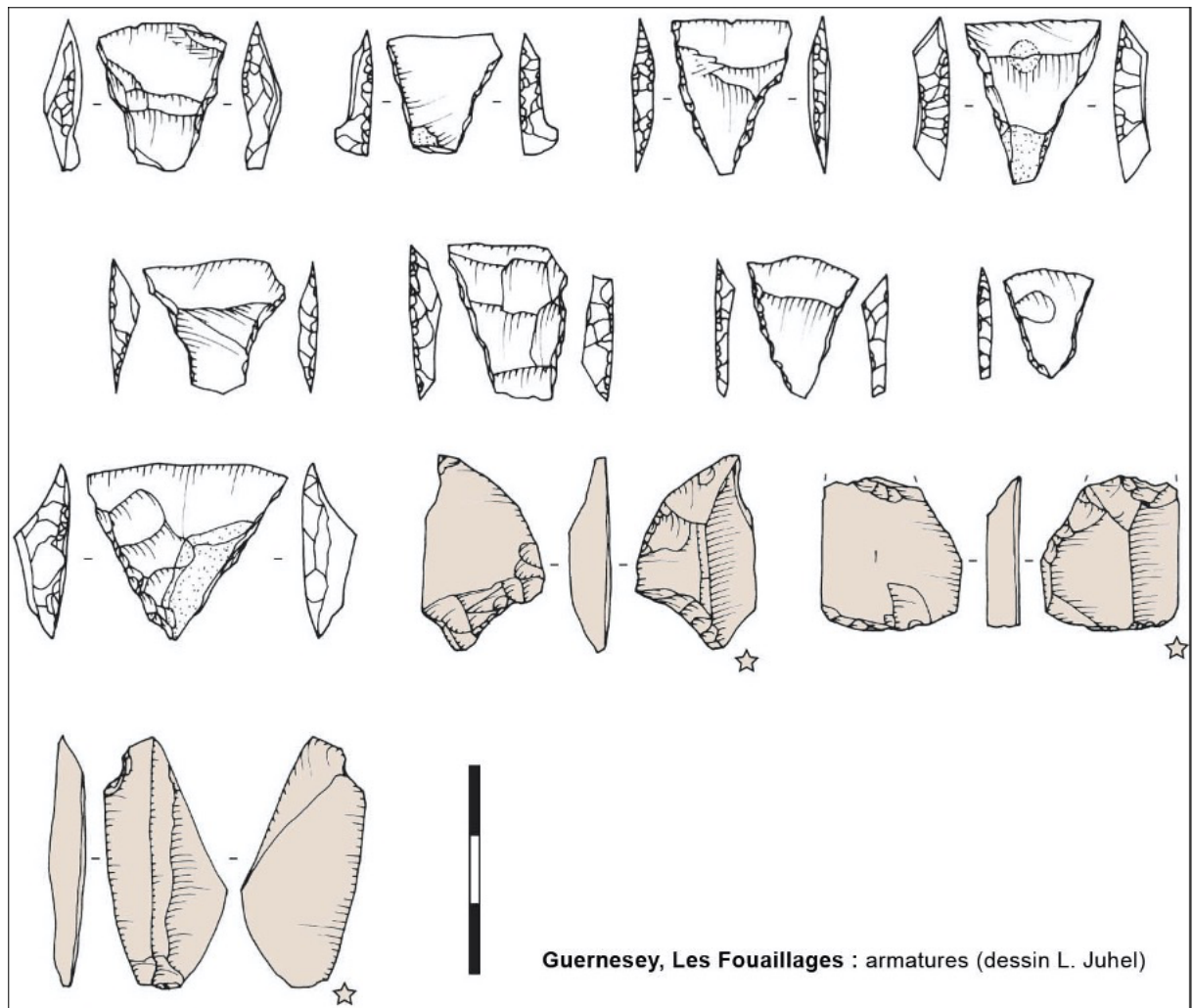


Figure 3: Transverse arrowheads and other projectile point armatures from Les Fouaillages that have been attributed to the Early Neolithic and Middle Neolithic I. The artefacts in brown have been made from Cinglais flint. (Drawing by L. Juhel), (Marcigny *et al.* 2010)

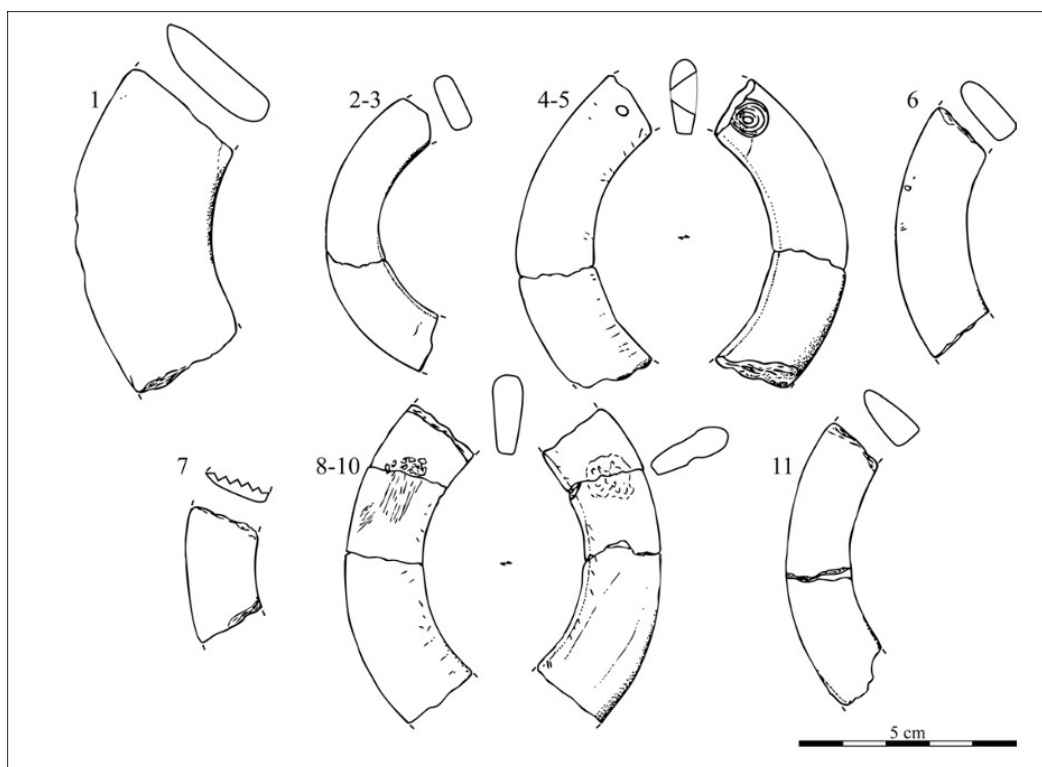


Figure 4: Schist bangle fragments from Les Fouaillages (2-3). (Drawing by N. Fromont), (Fromont 2013)

Site	No.	Island	Phase	Approx. Date	Site Type	Description
Royal Hotel, St Peter Port	1	Guernsey	BVSG 'cordons'	4900-4700	Buildings	Post-hole structure; artefact-rich layers
Les Fouaillages (Phase 1b)	2	Guernsey	BVSG 'cordons'	4900-4700	Tomb	Artefacts associated with Phase 1b mound
L'Ouzière	3	Jersey	BVSG 'cordons'	4900-4700	Occupation deposit	Artefacts associated with a preserved peat layer
Herm	4	Herm	Cerny ancien	4600-4300	Buildings	Beam-slot structures (possible)
Mont Orgeuil	5	Jersey	Cerny ancien	4700-4600	Occupation deposit	Artefacts associated with a dark 'occupation layer'
L'Erée	6	Guernsey	Pinacle-Fouaillages	4600-4300	Features	Pits, post-holes, hearths
Les Fouaillages (Phase 1d)	2	Guernsey	Pinacle-Fouaillages	4600-4300	Tomb	Artefacts associated with Phase 1d cists
La Motte	7	Jersey	Pinacle-Fouaillages	4600-4300	Occupation deposit	Artefacts possibly associated with a midden
Le Pinacle	8	Jersey	Pinacle-Fouaillages	4600-4300	Features	Occupation layer on axe production site, assoc. with hearths/middens

Table 1: Earlier Neolithic evidence from the Channel Islands (site with features/deposits; after (Garrow and Sturt 2017).

Early Neolithic funerary evidence might not be lacking entirely in the Channel Islands. The mound at Les Fouaillages on Guernsey (Kinnes 1982, 1986) is a multi-phase monument whose initial phase (Kinnes' Phase 1a) consisted of a small sub-triangular cairn over a chamber that was roofed partly by corbelling, with a capstone (Fig. 5). The monument was constructed on ground that had previously had its palaeosol scraped away, revealing the slightly pebbly sand beneath. We cannot rule out the possibility that this monument dates to the Early Neolithic; the stratigraphic evidence is consistent with such a date. The initial monument was then (Phase 1b) covered by a trapezoidal, turf barrow, 10 m long and 5 m wide at its east end, within which were found small 'deposits' containing pottery and schist bangles. A pair of large slabs that would later form the base of a funerary chamber may have been put in place during this phase, and the same is probably true of the small granite blocks around the edge of the mound, which define the limit of this primary barrow. Once again, it is hard to judge whether this phase belongs to the Early Neolithic or to the transition to the Middle Neolithic I.

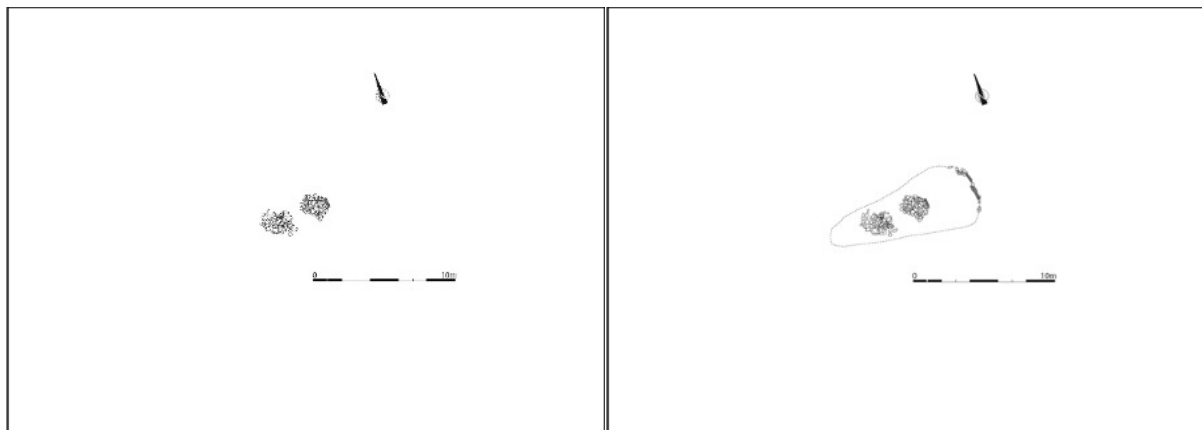


Figure 5: Phases 1a and 1b of the funerary monument at Les Fouaillages, attributed to the end of the Early Neolithic, VSG culture. (Plans by E. Ghesquière and C. Marcigny, based on Kinnes 1982 and 1986.)

#### 4.1.3 Middle Neolithic I (c. 4600–4300 BC): development of an insular Neolithic, the Pinnacle-Fouaillages group

From 4600 BC, the occupation of the Channel Islands underwent a post-pioneering phase, the Middle Neolithic I (Table 1). Local groups emerged (Chambon, Cerny, Castellar) and the ceramic repertoire diversified. On Jersey, the Middle Neolithic probably began with a phase, Cerny « Videlles » (at Mont Orgueil), which is a classic phase of the Middle Neolithic in the neighbouring parts of France. Shortly afterwards (between 4600 BC and 4500 BC?), the Pinnacle-Fouaillages group emerged, with its novel ceramic repertoire that probably originated in Breton Castellar pottery but whose varied repertoire of stabbed decoration attests to an insularisation of the style (Figure 6). The site of Le Pinnacle on Jersey was explored through sondage trenches that cut into levels rich in artefactual finds, but it is the monument at Les Fouaillages that has produced the ceramic assemblage that has served to define the Pinnacle-

Fouaillages group. This cultural group was initially taken to be an homogeneous ensemble by Mark Patton, who defined it (Patton 1992), but on the basis of H  l  ne Pioffet's ceramic study (Marcigny *et al.* 2010), an argument can be made for dividing it into two or three distinct phases (Figures 6-7). The first, and oldest, dating to 4600–4400 BC, corresponds to a veritable culture group – that of the Middle Neolithic I in the neighbouring part of France. For convenience, we still choose to call this phase Pinacle-Fouaillages even though it does not possess all the characteristics of the group as defined by Mark Patton. The profiles of the vessel bellies are segmented and the necks above them are markedly concave. The pots are highly decorated with motifs of garlands or fine complex cordons. Repouss   ‘pastilles’ are still present in this phase. We also note the existence of pots with deformed mouths, or ‘square-mouthed pots’, which evoke contemporary ceramic developments to the south in France. Vessel forms can be divided between bottles, which are hemispherical or three-quarter-spherical in profile; carinated vessels with concave necks; and ‘vase-supports’ – forms that Mark Patton did not integrate into his typology, but which have been found in some abundance at Les Fouaillages, at Grosnez Hougue and at La Motte. Means of suspension are represented by lugs, which are sometimes decorated around their circumference (at Les Fouaillages and Pinacle) and sometimes have a medial saddle (at Le Pinacle); by flattened perforated knobs with diameters ranging between 1 cm and 3 cm (at Les Fouaillages and Le Pinacle); and, more rarely, by perforated ‘tongues’ (at Grosnez Hougue and Le Pinacle). Decoration is abundant, and often consists of impressions made using points, spatulae, finger- or thumbnails, shells, and possibly also fishbones. Experimental replication would be necessary to understand the various decorative techniques. There are also several forms of applied decoration, principally the aforementioned repouss   ‘pastilles’ (at Les Fouaillages and Le Pinacle), doughnut-like knobs with a depressed centre (at Les Fouaillages) and by knobs that can occur in pairs (at Les Fouaillages, Le Pinacle and La Motte). These solid knobs are sometimes associated with radial stamped decoration that creates solar motifs (at Le Pinacle).

The decorative schemes are generally very diverse. The commonest are pointill   lines immediately below the carination (at Les Fouaillages, Herm, l'Er  e, Grosnez Hougue and Le Pinacle), forming arcs (at Le Pinacle and Les Fouaillages), crosses (at Les Fouaillages) or garlands (at Le Pinacle and Les Fouaillages), or simulating lugs (at Les Fouaillages). Incised decoration can be found on the rims of pots (at Le Pinacle and Les Fouaillages) or on narrow cordons generally situated on the necks of vessels (at Le Pinacle and Les Fouaillages). Grooved motifs are rarer, and consist of lines or arabesques fringed by dot impressions (at Le Pinacle, Les Fouaillages and La Motte). Finally, the existence of several vase-supports should be noted. These are cylindrical and are decorated with fields of dot decoration (on their mouths or on the body at Les Fouaillages and Grosnez Hougue). In Brittany and Normandy, it is hard to find the same kinds of pottery since each region remained faithful to its culture of origin (namely Castellic in Brittany and Cerny in Normandy). The only place where a close comparandum has been found is Barneville-Carteret, on the coast facing Jersey where, from an excavation by Cyril Billard, (Service R  gional de l'Arch  ologie), several small sherds with dot decoration evoking Pinacle-Fouaillages pottery have been found.

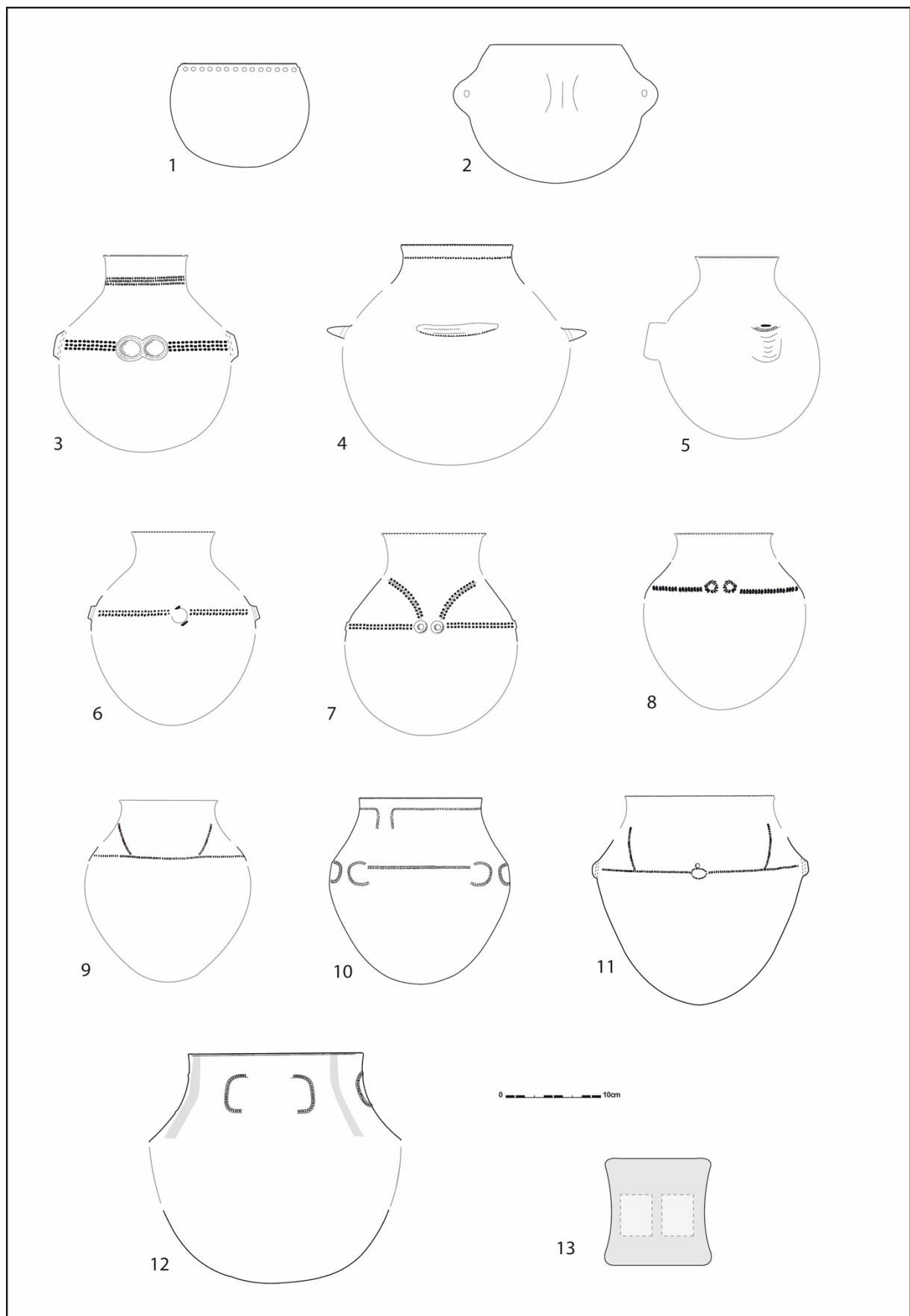


Figure 6: Summary of Pinacle-Fouaillages pottery. 1, 2: Mont Orgueil; 3: ensemble 2 from Les Fouaillages; 4-13: pots of Pinacle-Fouaillages. (Drawing by H. Pioffet) (Pioffet 2015)

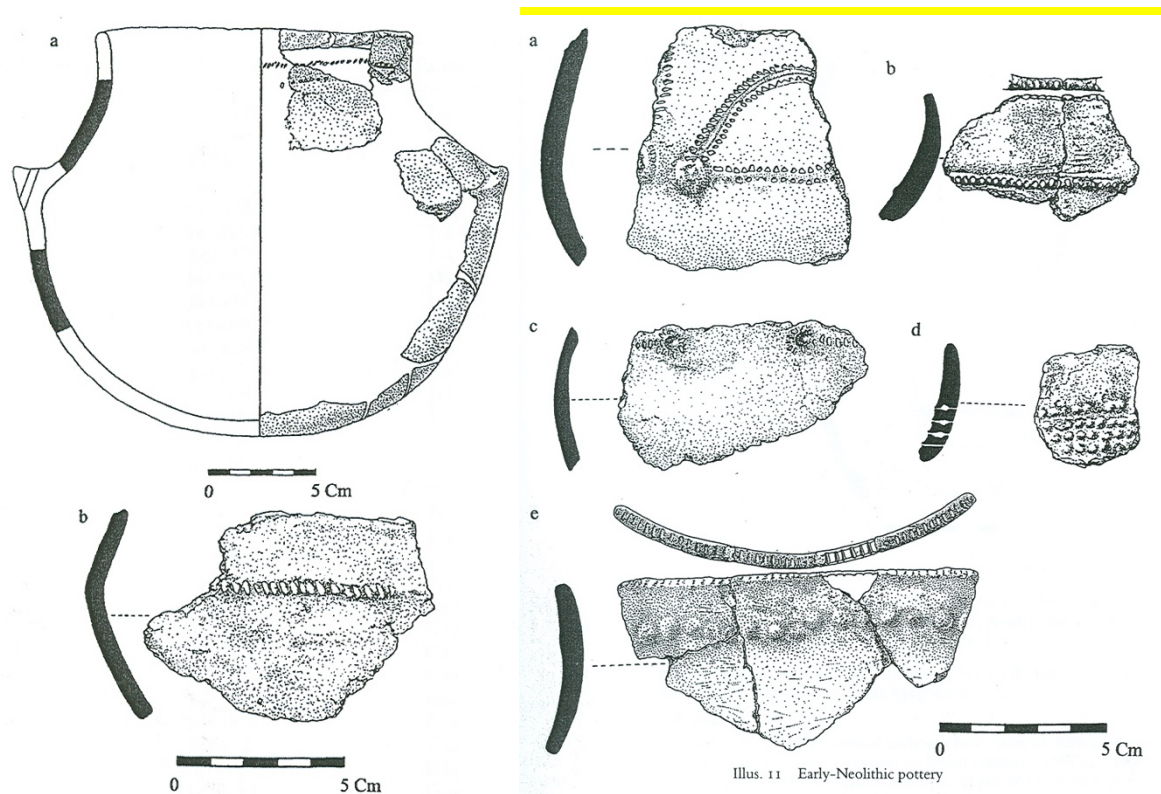


Figure 7: Ceramic styles from Le Pinacle (after Patton 1992).

Despite these important ceramic assemblages, the domestic contexts remain poorly known for the Middle Neolithic I period (as is the case elsewhere on the mainland). The lithic assemblages do not possess any significant items dating to this period, as in the Early Neolithic (Ghesquière and Marcigny 1998; Guyodo 2005), even though blades made from Cinglais flint must still have been in use at this time.

The presence of some polished artefacts of Alpine rock – including at least one Bégude-type adze-head and five rings – may be attributable to the end of the Early Neolithic (when the archipelago was Neolithised) or to the beginning of the Middle Neolithic I (Sheridan and Pailler 2012). The axeheads of Bernon and Tumiach type are probably a little later, but still belong to the Middle Neolithic I period. The abundance of Alpine artefacts (mostly axeheads) in Jersey is significant, with 16 being found there; fewer have been found on Guernsey, with just two axeheads confirmed to be of Alpine rock. The objects are of various types and their dating extends from the Early Neolithic to the Final Neolithic (the latter period represented by the axehead-pendants). The proportion of Alpine axeheads to those of other types of stone is higher in Jersey than in Brittany, with 12% of all Jersey axeheads being of Alpine rock.

Funerary evidence is slightly better represented, thanks once again to the barrow of Les Fouaillages which reached its maximum size during this period (Figure 8). The barrow was extended to the east, reaching a length of 16 m, and a maximum width of 8 m at its east (Phase 1c). Its eastern edge and part of the sides (but not the western end) was delimited by walling made from large granite blocks. At the east end, a rectilinear façade of upright slabs was constructed, with an axial entrance 1.20 m wide opening into a chamber, measuring 5 x 1.2 m,



of probably funerary function (although no bones survived). The edges of that axial chamber, from the façade to the back of the chamber, were delimited by piled turves which formed the main body of the barrow. Panels of wood or of wattlework hurdling may have completed the chamber structure. No covering for the chamber was found; this may have been of wood. The chamber was subsequently closed off and partly filled in and new structures were constructed using its constituent materials (Phase 1d). A small chamber was constructed at the east end of the barrow, its edges delimited by large granite blocks upon which roofing slabs (1 x 0.6 x 0.7 m) were placed. This chamber is very narrow, and at its front is a small vestibule that opens onto the façade of the monument. (The vestibule was devoid of finds.) To the west of this, within the footprint of the former Phase 1c chamber and overlying its fill, a rough rectangular cist was constructed, its sides consisting of two granite blocks and its rear being defined by the pair of large slabs that may have been erected during Phase 1b. In the interior of this cist, a small wall separated the space into two compartments. At the bottom of the cist, resting against the pair of large slabs, were found two decorated pots of Pinacle-Fouaillages style. They had been smashed *in situ*. A radiocarbon date of 5670±170 BP (BM-1894R, 4950–4060 cal BC) was obtained from organic material from the same layer. The monument was subsequently taken out of use, closed off by two granite slabs.

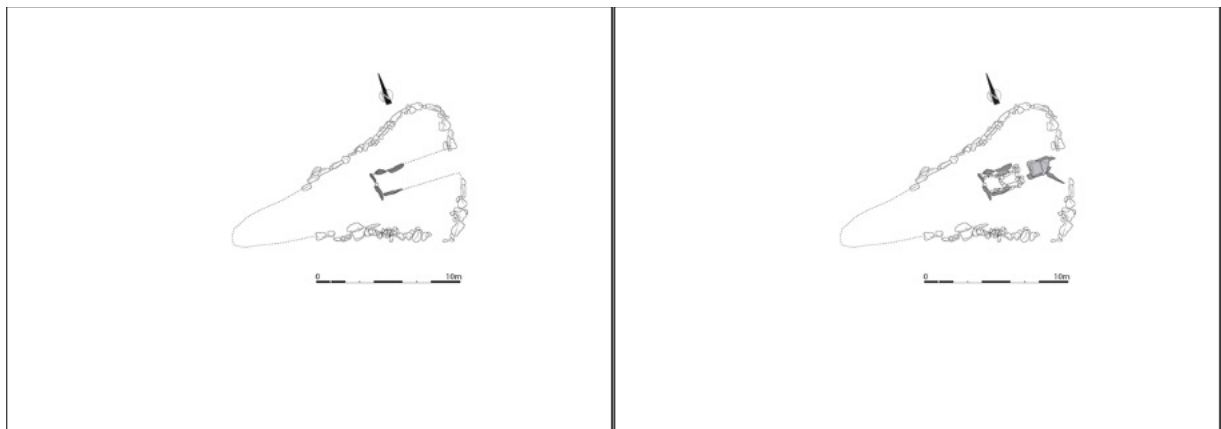


Figure 8: Phases 1c and 1d of the monument at Les Fouaillages, attributed to the Middle Neolithic I (Pinacle-Fouaillages group). (By E. Ghesquière and C. Marcigny, after site plans by Ian Kinnes, as published in Kinnes 1982, 1986.)

Despite the marked scarcity of evidence, this period – the Middle Neolithic I (MNI) – could correspond, as is the case in Brittany, with a phase featuring the construction of the earliest megalithic monuments, including the erection of the ‘hyper-megalithic’ huge standing stones known as menhirs or stelae. Even though it is not possible to date the large menhirs of the Channel Islands, as none has been excavated, we can interpret the warrior stela that forms the capstone of the dolmen of Le Déhus (Figure 9) as constituting the re-use of a massive standing stone, possibly reused as a protector of the tomb. The themes represented in the designs (a man + bow/arrows + ovicaprids + throwing stick + ?) correspond to those found in certain tombs of MNI date in the necropolis of Fleury-sur-Orne (Ghesquière 2021).



Figure 9: Photo of the figure of a warrior on the capstone of the dolmen of Le Déhus. (Photo: P. de Jersey.)

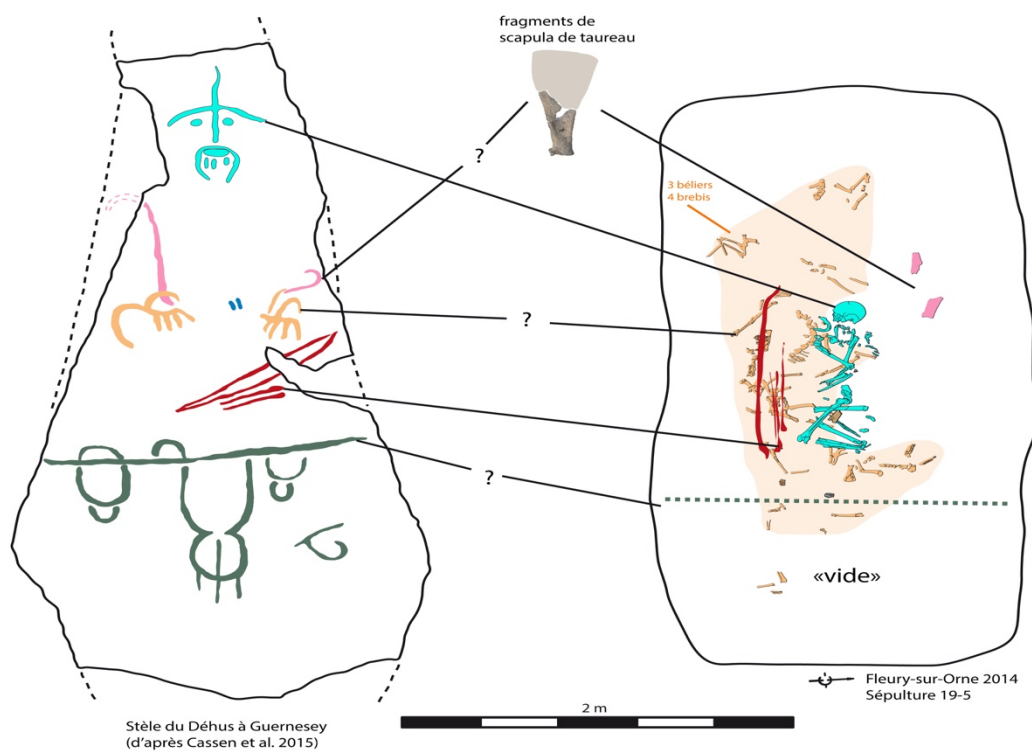


Figure 10: Comparison between the designs on the stele at Le Déhus, Guernsey (left) and from one of the graves (19-5) in the MNI cemetery at Fleury-sur-Orne « Les Hauts de l'Orne ». (Drawing by S. Cassen and E. Ghesquière); (Cassen *et al.* 2015; Ghesquière 2021)

#### 4.1.4 The Middle Neolithic II (4300–3900 BC), the golden age of megalithic construction in Armorica and the Channel Islands

For a long time in Brittany and Normandy, this period was only known from its funerary monuments and the grave goods contained within. Over the last two decades, the development of developer-funded archaeology has enabled the excavation of several settlement sites and enclosures, but our state of knowledge of such non-funerary sites still lags behind that of funerary monuments. The earliest Middle Neolithic II (MNII) structures found in Brittany and Normandy – round and rectangular houses and causewayed enclosures – have not yet been found in Jersey or the other Channel Islands. One enclosure associated with MNII artefacts was found at the Guernsey airport site, but the results of this excavation are limited.

Megalithic funerary monuments present a much fuller and more representative picture of the occupation of the Channel Islands during the Middle Neolithic. That said, among the rich megalithic sites of Jersey and Guernsey, few can be given a firm chronological attribution to the MNII period. The monument of Les Fouaillages is, as we have seen, a much earlier construction, modified over time, while others (possibly the simple dolmens) could possibly post-date this period. Menhirs remain undated, except for the two that are shaped as stylised females (namely Câtél /Castel and La Gran'mère de Chimquière, both in Guernsey – see below) which are attributed to the Final Neolithic. Among the megaliths that are unequivocally MNII in date, the six passage tombs of Jersey and Guernsey stand out, both by their architecture and their size: La Varde, Le Trépied (Figure 11) and Le Déhus on Guernsey; La Hougue Bie (Patton *et al.* 1999), Le Faldouet and Le Mont Ubé on Jersey. These monuments consist of a wide passage that widens out into a funerary chamber. Several cells (alcoves) leading off the chamber are often present (at Le Déhus, La Hougue Bie and Le Faldouet). The covering mound survives in two of these monuments, edged by a kerb of upright stones: at Le Déhus and La Hougue Bie. The state of preservation and the size of La Hougue Bie, with its compartmented chamber, places this monument above all the others in the Channel Islands (Figure 12). These few collective monuments, whose use will have been limited to a portion (privileged) of the population, attest to the existence of a socially differentiated society in the Channel Islands from 4300–4000 BC.



Figure 11: The passage tomb of Le Trépied, Guernsey. (Photo : C. Marcigny.)



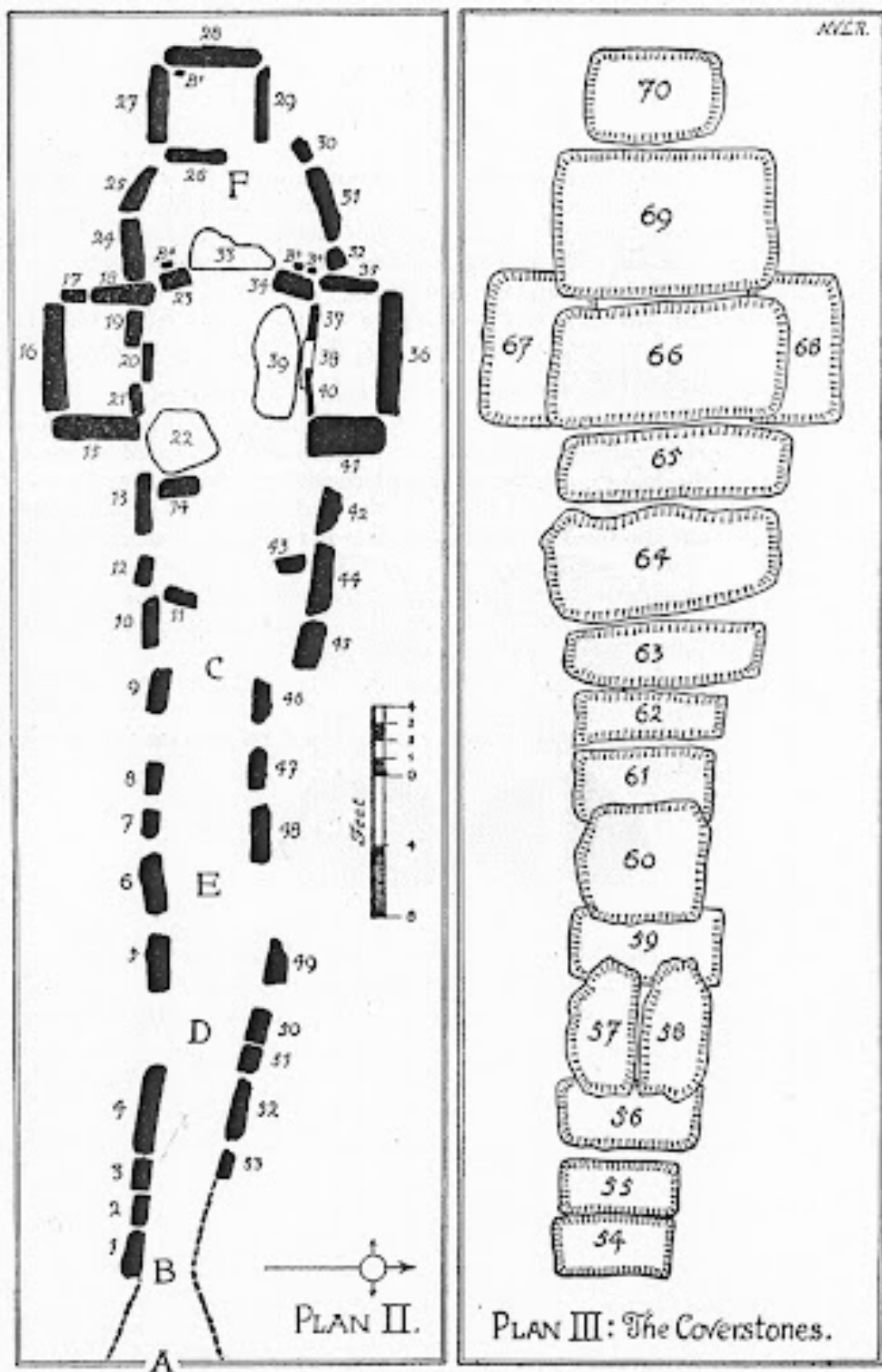


Figure 12: Plans of the passage tomb, La Hougue Bie. (Drawing by E. Ghesquière after Rybot 1947 and postcard.)

'Passage tombs' are a specific type of monument and they demonstrate a certain insularity in their design, while at the same time showing consistency between the two large islands of Jersey and Guernsey. Passage tombs of this form are wholly absent from Normandy, where the norm is a circular chamber and narrow passage. In Brittany, where the monuments are very numerous and diverse (Boujot and Cassen 1992), several passage tombs are present (for example, Men Ar Romped at Kerbors and Le Mané-Lud), although they do not possess all of the characteristics found in the Channel Islands: the chambers are not enlarged and there are no lateral alcoves.

Nevertheless, in the Channel Islands there are examples of monuments that show influence from the French mainland, such as La Sergenté on Jersey, with its circular chamber and its grave goods that belong to the Norman-Breton 'Carn' style. This offers further evidence that the Channel Islands were not a 'monolithic' insular culture but rather one that interacted with people on the adjacent mainland.

The excavations that have been undertaken at these monuments have produced a very limited set of finds, which is typical for this period, where the only items found (except for a few pieces of jewellery and so-called 'pen-knives', a type of lithic tool) are a few bones from several individuals. Because of this, and given the paucity of domestic contexts of MNII date in the Channel Islands, the material culture that can be attributed to this cultural phase, dating to 4300–3900 BC, is very sparse. The most important finds are the five 'vase-supports' ('coupes à socle') found at La Hougue Bie (Lucquin *et al.* 2007). These are all circular in plan, with a concave profile, decorated with wavy lines or with a hatched chequerboard pattern. One of the 'vase-supports' is undecorated. The latter is very characteristic of the examples found in and around Armorica, widely distributed; the closest comparandum is the one found at Herqueville, several kilometres from the Isle of Aurigny (Verron *et al.* 1996). Several undecorated 'vase-supports' have also been found at Le Trépiéd on Guernsey (Lukis 1853). These rare artefactual finds belonging to the MNII in Jersey can thus be situated within a classic regional context (i.e. one found in the neighbouring parts of France), even though the Channel Island passage tombs are original and insular in their design. This situation contrasts with the previous period, MNI, where the Pinnacle-Fouaillages pottery offers very marked insular characteristics.

#### **4.1.4 The Late-Final Neolithic, a long (3400–2300 BC), poorly-understood period (as on the French mainland)**

As is the case in north-west France, the fourth millennium remains very poorly understood in the Channel Islands. There are many possible reasons for this: settlements may have been lightly constructed; the population may generally have been low; and there are no obvious diagnostic features. All these factors hinder characterisation of this chronological episode belonging to Final Neolithic. In contrast, there is slightly more evidence for the period between 2800 BC and 2300 BC, and this allows us to reconstruct, at least in part, the pattern of occupation by communities on Jersey and Guernsey. Several excavated sites dating to this period have produced fairly important assemblages of pottery and/or lithic artefacts. Lithic assemblages are the most numerous because several have been found during surface prospection. The assemblage from Guernsey Airport, for example, produced a set of small scrapers made from cortical flakes, associated with microdenticulate objects in an assemblage

that is typical of the Final Neolithic; the presence in the assemblage of a fragment of a dagger made of Grand-Pressigny flint confirms this chronological attribution. Other sites such as Albecq, Route de Carteret, la Plaiderie and the Tranquesous on Guernsey (Hawley 2017) have produced a similar range of lithic artefacts to those found through surface prospection; they are dominated by small cortical scrapers that are probably attributable to the Final Neolithic. Assemblages containing pottery, such as that from the Royal Hotel in Saint Peter Port (Sebire 2012), are less frequent. At the Royal Hotel site, test-trenching uncovered – in addition to structural evidence that is hard to interpret – a fairly sizeable assemblage of Final Neolithic pottery. The series of carinated vessels, decorated with horizontal lines between the rim and the carination, are wholly specific to the island contexts of Jersey and Guernsey even though they undoubtedly share certain elements in common with the small bowls of Kérugou and Conguel type in Brittany.

The fragments of a dagger of Grand-Pressigny flint constitute a characteristic artefact of the Final Neolithic period. This flint, mined and worked in the centre of France (in and around the commune of Grand-Pressigny, Indre-et-Loire), was used in the specialist production of large blades destined to be hafted as daggers, and was occasionally used to make other artefacts such as the arrowhead found at l'Erée, Guernsey (Hawley 2017). These objects were exported over a wide area in the northern half of France, and to a lesser extent in the south of France and in surrounding countries (except Great Britain). They are very well represented in Brittany although they are rare in western Normandy. In Jersey and Guernsey, they are relatively well represented (taking into account the size of the islands) and they provide, once again, evidence for a considerable amount of interaction between the islands and the French mainland.

Finally, among the polished stone tools made from diorite there are the pick-axeheads of Jersey and Guernsey (Figure 13), and a workshop for their production at Le Pinacle. Totally absent from mainland France, these pick-axeheads might be comparable to the boat-shaped axeheads of the Final Neolithic, which are relatively frequent in Europe but which have a wholly insular character in the Channel Islands.



Figure 13: Pick-axeheads from La Pinnacle, Jersey. These carefully polished dolerite artefacts, which occur in two sizes, have been found in significant numbers in Jersey and Guernsey. (Photo: N. Mahrer)

The funerary sphere is less well represented than was the case for the Middle Neolithic in Jersey and Guernsey, although several megaliths do nevertheless date to this period. The gallery graves at Les Monts and Le Couperon represent a type of funerary architecture that is well represented in Armorica, in Normandy (Nord-Cotentin) and in Brittany. These complex monuments, whose imposing megalithic structure is covered by a relatively small mound, often contain unburnt human remains from numerous individuals, which may indicate that people from several communities were buried together in them. An unknown proportion of the other small funerary monuments in the Channel Islands – possibly the simple dolmens? – could belong to the Late/Final Neolithic but, in the absence of diagnostic finds, it is difficult to attribute them to one period rather than another. Finally, the numerous menhirs in the Channel Islands could potentially belong to the Final Neolithic. Just two of these can certainly be attributed to this period: the stylised female figure statue-menhirs of Câtél/Castel (Figure 14) and la Gran'mère du Chimquière, both in Guernsey. These two statues, with their sculpted shoulders, necklace and breasts, are characteristic of Final Neolithic monuments, with elements of their design being found in several gallery graves. Once more, the comparanda point to links with Brittany; in Normandy there are no examples of engraved art on megalithic monuments.





Figure 14 Menhir in the form of a stylised female, Câtel/Castel, Guernsey. (Photo: C. Marcigny.)

The extreme end of the Neolithic saw the intrusion of ‘Jersey Bowls’ into the assemblages, and soon after that, the first Beaker vessels appeared. This marked the beginning of the Bronze Age, as it had done in the two neighbouring regions of Brittany and Normandy. The presence of Beaker pottery prior to 2300 BC is not in evidence along the southern Channel coast. The rare discovery of copper daggers in the west of France attests to a poorly-defined Chalcolithic between the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age.

It is impossible to end this chapter on the Neolithic of the Channel Isles without mentioning the phenomenon of ground and polished stone axeheads, which are very widely distributed across all the islands (Hawley 2017). Most are of dolerite, a local rock which was probably exploited locally (at least in Guernsey) during the Neolithic, and whose products could have been exported widely in the neighbouring regions. However, no stone axehead has been found in an archaeological context in Jersey or Guernsey and these objects – all surface finds – cannot be attributed to a precise chronological context, nor can they be ordered into a typological sequence. They do attest, nevertheless, to widespread activity during the Neolithic (and possibly down to the beginning of the Bronze Age) across the whole of the Channel Islands, even if we cannot make additional comments about them.

It is only the axeheads (and adze-head) of Alpine jadeitite – 18 confirmed examples in the archipelago – that display characteristics that allow them to be attributed with certainty to

particular phases of the Neolithic, with some belonging to the Early Neolithic/Middle Neolithic I, others to the Middle Neolithic 2 and others (the axehead-pendants) to the Final Neolithic.

Arrowheads with tangs and/or barbs are also widely distributed across the Channel Islands (Lukis 1853). However, their shape is more suggestive of an Early Bronze Age rather than a Final Neolithic date, as is the case for the set of six Armorican barbed and tanged arrowheads found at Les Fouaillages (dating to 2000–1900 cal BC).

*Translated by Alison Sheridan*

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